C. G. 291 is used sparingly and limited to patterns in white on shoes and boots, and silver mountings on the belt. The Pshav have adopted Georgian attire.

C. G. 411 Not only is the Caucasian sober in the use of embellishments on his clothing, which is in itself quite elegant; he also does not wear any ornaments or trinkets. His esthetic sense finds an outlet in the decoration of his arms, however. The sheaths and hilts of daggers and sabers and the grips of pistols were often made of gold or silver, and adorned with precious stones or with niello-work (the latter also on the barrels). The Caucasian dagger--considered as important a part of the attire as is a tie in the West--has a straight, broad, double-edged blade with a groove (blood trough) running down the middle. Formerly, the armature consisted of one or two pistols, tucked behind the belt, a rifle, which the mountaineers always carried in a cover, and a saber. On the belt, various accessories (powderhorn, grease container, flint, etc.) were worn. Only

C. G. [713] the Khevsur preserved until quite recently full medieval armor: helmets, coats of mail, shields, swords, clubs and toothed thumb-

C. G. [292] rings. The armor was worn on festive occasions and also whenever a man might expect to be attacked because he was involved in a blood-feud, which was usually the case.

C. G. 291 The costume of the Caucasian women shows much more local variation than that of

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the guests have any questions, it is her girl-companion that must answer. The bride may at the most nod in affirmation.

She remains in her "hermitage" for some months before she is finally permitted to live with the rest of the household.[5]

The following description is chiefly that of the main Cherkess tribe, the Kabardians.

The *kalym* has been paid and the day of the wedding agreed upon. The relatives of the bridegroom begin the necessary wedding preparations. The odour of steaming beer and of the finest dainties creates a distinctive atmosphere, peculiar to a Kabardian wedding. On the eve of the marriage a group of men gallop through the *aul* inviting relatives to a preparatory feast, on the occasion of which a collection is taken to cover some of the expenses of the coming wedding, e. g., purchase of a veil for the bride, chartering of a bridal wagon.

On the following day young men fully-armed gather at the house of the groom and noisely gallop off to the bride's house. The bridegroom, however, does not go with them but "hides" at his best-man's house.[6] By doing so he becomes temporarily an adopted son *(kan)* of the latter's sib. A young companion called *shatso-kot* must always be at his side to protect him.

When the riders (or to be more exact, the bridal procession) reach the bride's house, her attendant, whom the riders brought along, is taken to the women's quarters, while the rest, after having feasted and danced till late into the night, are given lodging either in the house of the bride or of one of the neighbours.

Immediately after breakfast on the following day, the unusual hustle peculiar to a Cherkess wedding is observed outside the bride's house. The horses are being harnessed, the bride's belongings are being packed carefully but hurriedly into a trunk and put on the specially decorated bridal wagon. The bride herself is inside the house, being attired in her finest clothes. From her hair hangs a long white ribbon reaching to the ground. She is veiled, or rather, wrapped in a large white shawl. Her wedding dress differs but slightly from the ordinary Cherkess dress, except that it is made of more costly material. She is assisted on to the wagon and takes her place next to her ever-faithful girl-attendant. As soon as the bridal procession begins to move, the young men of the *aul*, all on horseback, try to snatch the caps away from the guests and thus begin the usual bridal horseraces. When the more "dignified" part of the procession enters the village of the groom, a wedding song is sung. By this time the racers have rested a bit and are ready to break into another wild chase. They again snatch one another's caps, throwing them on the ground, and as the rider gallops past one of the caps, he tries his skill at shooting a hole through it.

The bride is then taken by two women into the women's quarters, whilst outside the cracks of pistols and guns continue. The bride slowly sits down on a specially prepared bench, covered with a carpet. All eyes are fixed on her as a girl-friend of hers has the honour of removing the shawl.

While the riders outside are enjoying their beer, the youth of the village armed with long poles occupy a place difficult for the horsemen to pass. The

[5] Seidlitz, *op. cit.*, pp. 40 f; Deržavin, *op. cit.*, p. 10.
[6] C. Hahn, *Kaukasische Reisen und Studien*, p. 40.

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riders charge wildly, slashing their whips in all directions against their attackers whose task it is to prevent the horsemen form entering the house. The battle continues till the riders finally manage to jump over the fence or to break it down and thus force their way into the house. The "defenders of the bride" throw away their poles and begin dancing with the girls of the village. At noon they all enter the house to congratulate the parents of the groom. Dances commence again and last until midnight.

All this time, as we have already mentioned, the groom is absent, temporarily adopted by a neighbouring sib and guarded day and night by his *shatso-kot*. When the groom retires, the *shatso-kot* must spend the night in the yard protecting the bridegroom against any intruder. Never may he abandon his post. During the day it is his strict obligation to entertain the groom and this he usually does by horseback riding, away from the village. In the evening the two are joined by other companions. Toward midnight all leave except of course the *shatso-kot*, who must now accompany the groom to his bride.[7]

The first three nights, as a part of the wedding ceremony, the groom must undo the bride's stays.[8] Her corset is a broad red leather belt, which is sewed tightly about her waist and is never removed till the wedding night. According to Pallas, the corset was donned when she was 10 or 12 years old,[9] while other explorers claim that the corset was sewed on soon after the bride was born.[10] In any case, she may never take the corset off: it must remain untouched till it bursts and then it must immediately be replaced by another. The husband alone has the right to undo it, on the wedding night. The corset renders the waist very small in proportion to the shoulders, the purpose being to prevent the growth of the breasts, an essential requirement for Cherkess beauty.[11] In some places at least, the custom of wearing such stays has been recently discarded.[12]

Pallas and Ellis in their reports dating from the 18th century claim that the corset is "cut with a dagger, a custom sometimes productive of very fatal accidents."[13] Today untieing and not cutting the stays is the orthodox ceremony with the Cherkess[14] and the Ossetes. To cut them would subject the groom to endless ridicule.[15] Since the custom of *cutting* was "productive of very fatal accidents" we can easily understand why the pratice has been given up. Sometimes the bride's girl-friends maliciously tie a large number of very difficult knots, so that the temptation to make use of the dagger is not slight. On the first three nights the bride is not allowed to say a word to her husband.[16]

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[7] Hahn, *op. cit.*, pp. 40—44. For a description of a wedding among the Temirgoi see Vasil'kov, *op. cit.*, pp. 89—101.

[8] Ladyženskij, FT, p. 191.

[9] P. S. Pallas, *Bemerkungen auf einer Reise in die südl. Statth. des russ. Reichs etc.*, I, pp. 380 f.

[10] Ellis, *Memoir of a map etc.*, p. 24.

[11] Pallas, *l. c.*; Ellis, *l. c.*; Dubrovin, *Istorija*, I, i, p. 127. Prof. D. Wölfel has called my attention to a similar practice in Tyrol.

[12] For example, Ladyženskij could not find the practice in Kamenomostki Aul in 1927, FT, p. 191.

[13] Pallas, *op. cit.*, I, p. 381; Ellis, *l. c.*

[14] C. Hahn, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

[15] Baddeley, *op. cit.*, I, p. 270.

[16] Hahn, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

The Cherkess formerly had a very important ceremony, which however seems no longer to be observed, the virginity test.[17] Formerly if the bride were found to have lost her virginity before her wedding, she would be returned to her father, who would mercilessly mutilate, sell or even kill her.[18]

A week later the so-called *unaishe* (i. e., "introducing the young wife into the household") takes place. Up to this time she had to live in her own quarters, but from now on she is considered a full-fledged member of the family. In the midst of much shouting and shooting, songs and cheers, the young wife is led into the house by two women. She is wrapped in a shawl and wears tiny stilts attached to the soles of her shoes, which make her look unusually tall. She enters, stands shyly against the wall and then waits for someone to remove her shawl. Thereupon a woman places with her finger a sweet liquid called *urtsetl* into the mouth of the bride in order that her life in the new household may be ever as sweet as *urtsetl*.[19]

Only women were present in the house when the bride entered. They now all take a drink of beer from a large common vessel, then sing and finally break into a dance till wedding songs are heard from outside. This is a sign for the bride to come out, and as soon as she crosses the threshold, a boy standing on the roof, lets down a shower of confetti, nuts and tiny pasteries.

The bride then retires to her room, while the guests feast, drink and dance.

Some days later a ceremony called "Reconciliation" takes place. The bride's girl-friends take part in dances at the home of the groom while the young men join the bridegroom in his hiding place, where drinking is preferred to dancing. The groom then makes a little speech, thanking his "foster-father" for his kindness, and in return for all the courtesies shown him during his "adoption," he offers him an ox or a horse. The groom has been "hiding" all this time, and now he feels that it is about time for him to seek "reconciliation" with his family. In the meantime a sheep has been slaughtered and beer has been prepared for a feast when the "prodigal son" returns. A special cup of beer sweetened with honey and a little "snack" are waiting for him on a small side-table. All eyes are riveted on the son who "ran away" from home. The young ladies are bunched together in a corner of the room; the old men are likewise huddled against one of the walls; the parents of the groom and an honoured guest, an old man, stand in another corner of the room, while the bride with her girl-friends stands in the doorway. Suddenly the loud voice of the honoured guest calls all to attention. "Dear son," he cries, "you think that you have offended us, but you are mistaken. On the contrary, you have caused us indescribable joy! Come take this drink as a reward! Come, son, drink it and let us forget about the past." The groom rises and slowly approaches the old man, accepts the beer and hands it to his attendant. Thereupon he steps outside of the house where he drinks the beer and together with his companions partakes of the "snack." After a while he retires, while his companions and guests continue their feasting and dancing till morning.

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[17] Cf. Ladyženskij, FT, p. 184.

[18] Byhan, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

[19] *Urtsetl* is made of sheep's fat or butter mixed with honey.